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The CIA and Harvard

CIA Director Adm. Stansfield Turner's acknowledgment yesterday that some members of the Harvard faculty are willfully violating Harvard's rules on faculty relations with the CIA, combined with his suggestion that the situation really does not bother the agency much, is extremely troubling.

First, it should be noted that Harvard's decision to draft rules governing the relations between its faculty and the agency was hardly prompted by some fuzzy-headed thinkers jogging along the banks of the Charles. It was the Senate Intelligence Committee that suggested the CIA's covert use of academics — both to supply intelligence analysis and to recruit foreign students for possible CIA employment — raised troubling questions, and it was the committee that recommended the CIA should be more forthcoming with universities.

Second, the rules were drafted by persons not blind to the needs of government. They included Archibald Cox and Don Price, former dean of the Kennedy School of Government. The committee on which these men served succinctly summarized its reasoning:

"The existence on the Harvard campus of unidentified individuals who may be probing the views of others and obtaining information for the possible use of the CIA is inconsistent with the idea of a free and independent university. Such practices inhibit free discourse and are a distortion of the relationship that should exist among members of an academic community, and in particular of the relationship that should exist between faculty members and students."

Proceeding from that rationale, the committee proposed — and the university eventually adopted — relatively straightforward rules governing the behavior of its

faculty. Faculty members who consult on contract with the CIA should report that to their deans; faculty members who recruit students for possible CIA employment should publicly notify the university of that activity; recruiters should not recommend the name of any student to the CIA for possible employment without the permission of that student.

Adm. Turner suggests these rules are discriminatory because they don't apply to any other potential employer of university personnel; further, he argues, they are Harvard's rules, not the CIA's, and it is up to Harvard, and not the CIA, to enforce them. Finally, Turner notes, nothing in federal law prohibits the secret activities of the CIA on college campuses.

Of course, Turner is correct in all respects. Yet, even he must see at least the potential for a chilling effect on academic discussion if it is thought that faculty members are quietly in the employ of the CIA, a chilling effect that simply would not exist if faculty members were thought to be employed secretly by, say, IBM or the Agricultural Department.

Beyond this, there is a serious question whether the CIA, in dealing with the employees of a private institution, should knowingly countenance activities that violate the wholly legal employment policies of that private institution, just because it is not the CIA's obligation to enforce those policies.

Harvard President Derek Bok has declared, "I do not believe that an agency of the United States should act in this fashion." We agree. The congressional committees drafting a charter for the CIA must weigh the Bok view carefully.